

## Fact Sheet

### SS/HS Is “a Stroke of Brilliance”

*Somebody in Washington had a stroke of brilliance to decide that they could put monies together, decide [on] a common direction, and have a common vision for children and families across our United States. I say to them if it can be done in our Nation’s capital, I know it can be done locally. (Project director, Omaha SS/HS initiative, Omaha, NE)*

*This [is] one of the best grants I have ever been involved in. It serves the purpose of creating a safer community. (School principal, Houston SS/HS initiative, Houston, TX)*

*In all the years I’ve been in schools, I have never seen a more powerful program. We see changes in kids’ behaviors and family dynamics. We have all the pieces that fit together to make changes.” (School principal, Olympic SS/HS initiative, Bremerton, WA)*

*The Pinnacle Program has touched every child, every mom, and every neighbor in the community. We have done so much in really infiltrating where our kids are in school, after school, evenings, Saturdays, and Sundays at church. Outreach is one of our powerful components. (Project director, Weslaco SS/HS initiative, Weslaco, TX)*

When the Safe Schools/Healthy Students (SS/HS) Initiative was being designed, its architects realized that no single activity can be counted on to prevent violence. Thus, they decided to take a broad approach, providing the resources so schools and communities could draw on the best practices and the latest thinking in education, justice, social services, and mental health to reduce violence and substance abuse among our youth.

This “stroke of brilliance” has not gone unnoticed. More than 150 school-led coalitions are taking up the challenge put to them by this unique Federal collaboration by building or enhancing the infrastructures needed to strengthen healthy child development, thus reducing violent behavior and substance use. As one SS/HS school administrator put it, “I know students across the Nation could benefit from a program like this. It has made a difference in their lives and that is what counts.”

The faces of SS/HS are many, but the vision is one—safe schools, healthy students.

#### Faces of SS/HS: Omaha, NE

Omaha is a metropolitan area of nearly 500,000 residents and is the 42<sup>nd</sup> largest city in the United States. The area boasts a booming economy fueled by more than 19,000 businesses. Omaha is home to 2 major universities, and with more than 47,000 students, its school district is the largest in Nebraska. The Omaha Public School District has a fairly diverse student body that includes a large proportion of low-income, special education, and non-English speaking students, including an influx of families from Central and South America. Despite the city’s prosperity, there are pockets of severe poverty. Several areas of Omaha have 18 percent unemployment rates, nearly 6 times that of the State average, and as many as 80 percent of the district’s students receive free and reduced-price lunches. Since its inception in 2002, the grant has implemented multicultural programs to increase access to family support, including mental health services, parent training, developmental programs for youth, safety equipment for schools, teacher training in positive discipline, and educational enhancement opportunities for youth.